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ABSTRACT

This report for the 1982-83 school year summarizes the results of Project Primetime, an experimental program to improve students' basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic by reducing class size from kindergarten through the second grade. Three major results emerged from the study: (1) Students in the project scored higher on standardized tests than did students in larger classes; (2) Discipline and behavior problems were reduced in classes with lower teacher/student ratios; and (3) Teachers reported increased productivity and effectiveness in classes with fewer students. It was concluded that small class size during the early years of a child's academic development strongly enhances the quality of the child's initial educational experiences. Appendices list the nine schools participating in Project Primetime during 1981-82 and 1982-83 and enumerate the 24 school corporations and 28 school sites participating in the program during the 1983-84 and 1984-85 school years. (RH)

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PROJECT PRIMETIME

1982-83 REPORT

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Indiana Department of Public Instruction
Harold H. Negley, Superintendent

PROJECT PRIMETIME

1982-83
REPORT

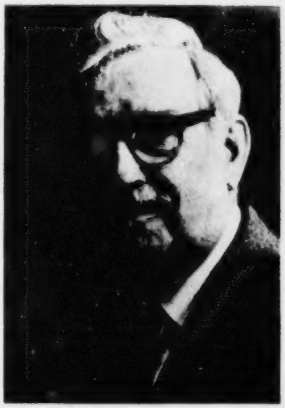
Division of Curricu'um
Indiana Department of Public Instruction
Harold H. Negley, Superintendent
November 21, 1983

Message from Governor Robert D. Orr

As we continue our quest for a more effective educational system, I believe it essential that a thorough and extensive examination of Project PRIMETIME, our early grades basic skills program, be a part of that quest.

This preliminary report, prepared by the Department of Public Instruction, may help shed some light on the advantages of small class size and its effect on learning. Although more research needs to be done, I strongly recommend that this report be part of the dialogue in our search for educational excellence in the Indiana public school system.

Message from Superintendent of Public Instruction Harold H. Negley



With our PRIMETIME project at the two year old mark, we now have some preliminary evidence on the effects of this experiment to upgrade the quality of a student's early school experiences. The results are good, and largely bear out more academic-oriented studies which indicate greater learning on the part of students in smaller classes. Comments from parents and teachers indicate not only acceptance of the program but an enthusiastic endorsement as well. I believe that Project PRIMETIME deserves to be expanded on a larger scale and I wholeheartedly recommend this report to you.

What is Project PRIMETIME?

Proposed in 1981 by Governor Robert D. Orr, Project PRIMETIME is an experimental program to improve students' basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic by reducing class size in the critical, early-learning grades of K through 2.

To test the theory that a smaller, closer-knit classroom atmosphere is more conducive to learning, the Indiana General Assembly appropriated $300,000 for the 81-82 and 82-83 school years to implement the program in nine schools across Indiana. Schools were selected from cities, towns and rural areas. In these two school years, a total of 24 kindergarten, first and second grade classes saw their student-teacher ratios reduced to 14 to 1.

Buoyed by early studies confirming the basic theory that reduced class size does lead to increased learning, the 1983 General Assembly, at Governor Robert D. Orr's request, increased Project PRIMETIME funding for the 83-84 and 84-85 school years to $2 million. As part of this added appropriation a summer school PRIMETIME component was added for the 1983 summer school year.

The Indiana Department of Public Instruction, under the direction of Superintendent Harold H. Negley, has directed Project PRIMETIME since its inception in 1981. This report summarizes the results of Project PRIMETIME during the years of 1982-83.

The Results of the Study

Using a combination of standardized test results, teacher records, and personal interviews with teachers, three major results emerged from the study:

1. *PRIMETIME students scored higher on test results than did students in larger classes.*

PRIMETIME classes of 14 or fewer students were compared with larger classes of an average 23 students. On reading and math tests given after each semester, PRIMETIME students did much better than the other students in larger classes. The following table lists the test results:

Table 1 Percent Who Improved in 1982-83*

	READING		MATH	
	PRIMETIME Students	OTHER Students	PRIMETIME Students	OTHER Students
After One Semester	54	40	62	48
After Two Semesters	61	47	53	49

*"Improved" means they exceeded normal growth.

2. *Discipline and behavior problems were reduced with the lower teacher-student ratios.*

With fewer students in class, teachers reported a marked reduction in discipline- and behavior-related problems in the classroom.

For example, one teacher reported, "There's less clamoring for attention in small classes. They help each other more. They compete less with each other!"

Another said, "Behavior is a lot better in my room with the smaller amount of students."

3. Teachers reported increased productivity and effectiveness with the smaller class sizes.

Information from teachers' records indicate that there are many more opportunities for immediate feedback as new concepts are taught. The students can be more closely observed and supervised by teachers, a factor which can determine whether appropriate progress is being made or additional teaching is required.

One teacher stated: ". . .With fewer students it is easier to scan the whole group and see who is having trouble and help them before they do the whole paper incorrectly."

Another noted, "It's very rewarding to me to be able to catch the children's mistakes, misunderstandings or misconceptions and remediate them right away."

Still another added, "One of my goals this year was to teach more social studies and science, I have had time to teach extra things (in these areas) because of the size of the group."

Summary of Test Scores

Readers of this report must take into account that test scores for young children are often unstable. Test scores gathered at any level can reflect only a small portion of what students learn. This is especially true with small children given their lack of experience in taking tests. Even so, people continue to rely on test scores as an indication that programs are working. With this in mind, then, graphs have been provided below which give test results in more detail — by subject and grade level after two semesters for both years of PRIMETIME.

Scores related to reading and mathematics were gathered at each site using the school district's established standardized tests. Comparisons were made for each student based on test scores gathered before the children were enrolled in a PRIMETIME class and after they had participated in a project class for a specified length of time. This data, referred to here as pre-tests and post-tests, was compared to see if scorers had improved. The comparisons were made both at the end of the first semester and at the end of the second semester. A compilation of the second semester is presented on the following two pages, and the percentage of students who improved is reported in the attached tables.

Given the note of caution above concerning instability of test scores for very young children, the percentages of students improving their scores are indeed encouraging. The improved scores are portrayed in pre-tests and post-tests. As seen in the following tables, more project students improved than students in regular sized classes in every situation. This was true at all three grades, in all three subjects, and at both time periods.

The striking thing about the findings is the *consistency* with which project classes showed higher percentages of students with improved scores. Again, this consistency can be seen across all grades and subjects at both time periods. The differential between project students and other classes was generally greater after two semesters. This study should not be considered

definitive research due to the many limitations inherent in evaluating a project of this type. The test scores, nevertheless, can be viewed as a positive and encouraging support of the effectiveness of small classes.

Table 2: A One Year Comparison of Percent Who Improved After Two Semesters, 1982-1983

	READING (Verbal)		MATH (Quantitative)	
	PRIMETIME Students	Other Students	PRIMETIME Students	Other Students
Kindergarten (3 sites)	63%	53%	54%	56%
Grade 1 (3 sites)	45%	39%	58%	44%
Grade 2 (3 sites)	67%	49%	44%	44%
Total K-2	61%	47%	53%	49%

Table 3: A Two Year Comparison of Percent Who Improved After Two Semesters

		READING (Verbal)		MATH (Quant'tative)	
		PRIMETIME Students	Other Students	PRIMETIME Students	Other Students
Kindergarten (3 sites)	1981-82	48%	20%	65%	35%
	1982-83	63%	53%	54%	56%
Grade One (3 sites)	1981-82	70%	32%	67%	61%
	1982-83	45%	39%	58%	44%
Grade Two (3 sites)	1981-82	51%	46%	94%	75%
	1982-83	67%	49%	44%	44%
Total K-2 (9 sites)	1981-82	54%	26%	72%	50%
	1982-83	61%	47%	53%	49%
Total Tested	1981-82	231	338	166	346
	1982-83	223	315	190	288

Summary of Teacher Responses

Information from teacher's records indicate that teachers and students in smaller classes experience many more opportunities for immediate feedback as new concepts are being taught. Children in smaller classes have many more occasions when their practice activities can be observed and supervised by teachers, so that both know immediately whether appropriate progress is being made or whether additional teaching is required.

One teacher related several learning activities from her classroom including presenting a play, working with money, and reading maps.

"I love this group. I can't believe how well everyone is doing! I am able to work with different things and more things. Each child worked on the computer twice today. My middle (reading) group took over the (classroom) newspaper. They divided into five sections, each taking one section. It was super. They did it by themselves."

Another teacher reported,

"The class is now working more independently and quietly. I can work with each one individually without too much disturbance in the room from other children."

In comparing her small class to a regular class, one teacher noted,

"I was so happy with their (reading) scores. They were terrific. I can't believe it."

Another teacher stated,

"I feel that this small class size has been very beneficial to the children. With the small class I am able to do much more small group and individual teaching. Increased use of learning centers has also helped provide extra practice for students who need it."

One teacher capsulized the benefits of small classes in this way:

"Not only do they learn, but they also *enjoy* the process of learning."

Noting a similar pattern, another teacher wrote,

"Children seem to enjoy coming to school. One parent reported that when her child was sick, the girl cried because she couldn't come to school. There have been many positive comments from parents that children do enjoy coming to school."

Concluding Remarks

In summary, project PRIMETIME has provided Indiana educators, parents and children with real evidence in favor of the positive effects of smaller class size. Small class size during the crucial early years of a child's academic development strongly enhances the quality of that child's initial educational experiences.

Among the advantages the project provided to its young students were:

- the value of individuality;
- troubleshooting and targeting potential problems which may arise in the classroom or with an individual student;
- decreased discipline problems;
- increased amount of attention from teacher to child and increased practice time in the classroom for students;
- possibility for expanded curriculum;
- decreased possibility of teacher "burn out";
- increased eagerness of child towards learning — students enjoy their primary school experience.

While the above points cannot necessarily be expressed in a graph, they nonetheless express the *quality* of education provided to young Hoosier students. These young children approach their first years of school eager to learn and open to the process of learning.

The experience with PRIMETIME shows many advantages for classroom organization with fewer students. Teachers and parents like the program. Yet in a larger sense, PRIMETIME must eventually be judged on the basis of its contribution to the children, who enter through the schoolhouse door each fall seeking an education.

Appendix A

The following nine schools have participated in Project PRIMETIME during the first two school years of the program, 1981-82 and 1982-83. The results of the various tests and other measures contained in this report were obtained from these institutions.

Brentwood Elementary
Ft. Wayne Community Schools
Allen County

Brookside Elementary School - IPS #54
Indianapolis Public School Corporation
Marion County

Eaton Elementary School
Delaware Community School Corporation
Delaware County

Hope Elementary School
Flat Rock-Hawcreek School Corporation
Bartholomew County

Hymera Elementary School
Northeast Corporation
Sullivan County

Kentland Elementary School
South Newton Corporation
Newton County

Vogel Elementary
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation
Vanderburgh County

W.E. Wilson Elementary School
Greater Clark Community School Corporation
Clark County

Washington Elementary School
Plymouth Community School Corporation
Marshall County

Appendix B

As a result of the $2 million appropriation given by the General Assembly in 1983, Project PRIMETIME has been expanded to 24 school corporations and 28 school sites for the 83-84 and 84-85 school years.

Listed below are the schools participating in the program in these years:

Brentwood Elementary School
Ft. Wayne Community Corp.
Allen County

Brookpark Elementary School
Lawrence Township Schools
Marion County

Cayuga Elementary School
North Vermillion Community Corp.
Vermillion County

Eaton Elementary School
Delaware Community School Corp.
Delaware County

Highland Heights Elementary School
Richmond Community Schools
Wayne County

Hope Elementary School
Flat Rock-Hawcreek School Corp.
Bartholomew County

Hymera Elementary School
Northeast Corporation
Sullivan County

Jackson Elementary School
Clinton Prairie School Corp.
Clinton County

John H. Castle Elementary School
Warrick County Corp.
Warrick County

Kentland Elementary School
South Newton Corp.
Newton County

Middleton Elementary School
Madison Consolidated
Jefferson County

Moran Elementary School
Penn-Harris-Madison Corp.
St. Joseph County

New Haven Elementary School
East Allen County Schools
Allen County

Newton Yost Elementary School
Liberty Elementary School
Duneland Corporation
Porter County

Petersburg Elementary School
Pike County Corp.
Pike County

School #48 Russell
School #54 Brookside
Indianapolis Public Schools
Marion County

Stony Creek Elementary School
Noblesville Schools
Hamilton County

Templeton Elementary School
Monroe County Community School Corp.
Monroe County

Union Elementary School
Hopewell Elementary School
Franklin Community School Corp.
Johnson County

Vogel Elementary School
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp.
Vanderburgh County

W.E. Wilson Elementary School
Greater Clark County School Corp.
Clark County

Warren Elementary School
Vigo County School Corp.
Vigo County

Waterford Elementary School
Goshen Community Schools
Elkhart County

West Elementary School
Washington Elementary School
Plymouth Community School Corp.
Marshall County